

adjacent to a rear portion of a vehicle and forward of the hitch," as recited in amended claim

1. None of the cited references, singly or in combination, teaches or suggest at least this feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 and dependent claims 3 and 34, and 36-37, which depend from claim 1, are allowable over the cited references.

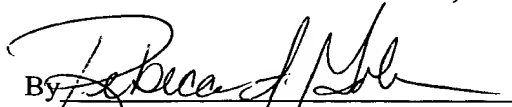
CONCLUSION

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 624-1250 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: Exhibit I

ATTACHMENT-EXHIBIT I

MARKED-UP VERSION OF CLAIMS SHOWING CLAIM CHANGES

1. (Twice Amended) A step apparatus, including:

a mounting portion adapted to be secured to [the] a vehicle by a hitch assembly thereof; and

a step portion hinged to the mounting portion forward of a hitch portion of the hitch assembly whereby the step portion may be moved from a first position where the step portion is disposed above [the] a vehicle hitch and usable with or without the vehicle hitch being in use, to a second, stowed position adjacent to a rear portion of a vehicle and forward of the hitch.

3. (Amended) The step apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said mounting portion includes a body member adapted to engage a tubular socket of a [receiver-type] towing hitch.